COMPUTER SCIENCE
in
ARKANSAS

GOVERNOR HUTCHINSON ANNOUNCES
CS TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

LITTLE ROCK – The Arkansas Computer Science and Cybersecurity Task Force report submitted to Governor Asa Hutchinson on Oct. 1, provides many recommendations for growing the state's CS education and opportunities. One recommendation for Arkansas schools is to add a requirement for a computer science credit in order to graduate from high school. Another recommendation is that every public high school have at least one computer science teacher.

"From the day in 2015 when I signed Act 187 and Arkansas became the first state to require every high school to offer computer science, we have led the way nationally," Governor Hutchinson said today. "But we can't rest on our success. We owe it to our students to provide access to cutting-edge computer science education, and the task force's recommendations will achieve that. As more students study computer science, we will strengthen our workforce and attract even more businesses that will bring high-paying, satisfying jobs."

"The members of the task force have produced a far-reaching blueprint that will assure Arkansas's place as a national leader in computer-science education."

Governor Hutchinson formally accepted the CS Task Force's 52-page report on Oct. 1, during a news conference in the Governor's Conference room. The Governor established the panel in December 2019 to review and to recommend ways to continue to build the Arkansas Computer Science Initiative and maintain Arkansas's national leadership on computer science education.

The Governor also announced that T-Mobile will donate 100 gigabytes of data to eligible households and 18,000 internet access devices to Arkansas students as part of its Project 10Million, a nationwide program to increase access to the internet in rural areas.

"This generous donation, combined with the Arkansas Access Point Project, will further increase the number of students with home access to the internet," the Governor said. "T-Mobile's leaders understand that students need reliable access to the internet. This is especially welcome as we search for ways to continue school during the pandemic."

"T-Mobile has been working closely with schools, state governments and technology partners since the pandemic started to connect those who need it most, including more than 1.6 million students nationwide and nearly 5,000 right here in Arkansas," said Mike Katz, Executive Vice President, T-Mobile for Business. "Now, with Project 10Million, we are going even bigger to tackle this critical issue head on – connecting thousands more across the state! We believe access to the internet means access to opportunity, and we're going to give millions of students in the U.S. the connectivity they need and deserve."

In a third announcement, the Governor said that Arkansas will increase high-speed broadband capacity by up to five times the current speeds to K-12 school districts, charter schools, and education cooperatives. The upgrade will be completed by July 1, 2021. Arkansas will be one of the first states to meet the new standard of 1 Mbps per user.

The CS Task Force Report can be found HERE. Slides from the press conference can be found HERE. Video from the press conference is HERE.

CS STATE DIRECTOR ANTHONY OWEN COMMENTS ON CS TASK FORCE REPORT

"Governor Asa Hutchinson announced the release of the 2020 Arkansas Computer Science and Cybersecurity Task Force (CSCTF) Report. A copy of the report may be found at: https://bit.ly/ARCSCTF2020

Governor Hutchinson also announced the top-seven, phase-one priorities taken from the recommendations of the report which include:

1. Require one computer science credit to graduate
2. Require every public high school to have a computer science teacher – endorsed or certified
3. Provide incentives for training and teaching CS
4. Increase internships and partnerships with private technology companies
5. Increase higher education computer science course and student enrollment
6. Attract new tech companies to Arkansas and incentivize tech companies to expand in the state
7. Develop policies to attract tech workers to Arkansas

The Arkansas Department of Education Office of Computer Science supports these recommendations 100% and looks forward to working with the Governor's Staff, Secretary Key, and educational leaders across Arkansas to develop implementation strategies and timelines."
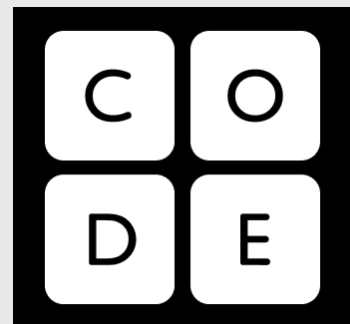
CELEBRATE ARKANSAS'S PROGRESS IN CS EDUCATION!

Today, Code.org, the Computer Science Teachers Association, and the Expanding Computing Education Pathways Alliance, released the 2020 State of Computer Science Education: Illuminating Disparities. The report shows that despite the increased diversity in computer science classrooms across the country over the last decade, disparities still exist as less than half of high schools in the U.S. teach computer science.

This year we're celebrating that Arkansas stood out for providing all students with access to computer science courses, including AP CS courses which were a close representation of our student population statewide. Code.org's recent report highlights and commends the state's progress specifically for advancing computer science in our schools and student outcomes.

Arkansas is one of few states that has adopted all nine policies recommended by the Code.org Advocacy Coalition.

Thanks are due to the teachers, students, school districts, parents, and CS advocates who helped make this happen. Arkansas is proud to support computer science education and will continue to strive daily to be better!

You can find a copy to the of the 2020 State of Computer Science Education report here. Turn to page 36, to see what all our state has accomplished!

DIGITAL CITIZEN WEEK IS OCT. 19-23

Now more than ever it is so important to be teaching our students about good digital citizenship. As adults we know that students can hinder their futures or others before they even begin if not taught important lessons on digital citizenship.

Let's give Digital Citizenship week the emphasis it deserves Oct. 19-23, 2020, by highlighting and teaching our students the importance of their digital footprint and make them aware of potential consequences. Here are just a few lesson resources to help with planning for this important week: https://bit.ly/3iyxPEH

SPOTLIGHT OF CHAIRMAN OF THE CS TASK FORCE

Upon the announcement of the CS Task Force Report, the CSforAR Team engaged in a Q&A with Deputy Chief of Staff, Bill Gossage, regarding his work not only as Chair of the CS Task Force, but of his tenure as a whole with the Computer Science Initiative in Arkansas.

Q: When you championed House Bill Act 187 in 2015, did you imagine the CS Initiative would become what it is today with Arkansas leading the nation in CS education? How has it exceeded and/or not lived up to your expectations?

A: "I don't think a legislator can ever know the impact of legislation as it is introduced and passed. I certainly hoped it would meet the Governor's goals and expectations, but I do not remember thinking this was going to make us number 1. The credit for that goes to the Governor who didn't just sign it into law and wait to see what happened. He made it a centerpiece of his work. He started visiting schools to push the initiative and never stopped. Of course, Anthony Owen and his team have done a great job as well."

Q: Did you have any prior experience with CS education? Did this drive your passion for Act 187?

A: "Not specifically in computer science but I had been in education for over 30 years. When the Governor approached me about running his signature piece of legislation, it was a great honor. I think he probably chose me because I was an educator and I had been a longtime supporter of his."

Q: In your current role, Deputy Chief of Staff for Governor Asa Hutchinson, you have seen first-hand the development of CS education in this state. How do you see it evolving?

A: "Every time I'm involved in some transformative work, I see a familiar pattern from my favorite leadership book, Good to Great. The analogy from the book is the giant flywheel which is very heavy and very hard to begin to turn. However, once you get it going, it picks up more and more speed until you just can't stop it. When the Governor started this initiative, the flywheel was sitting still. Lots of people went to work pushing together to make it spin and it's continuing to spin faster and faster. I believe this initiative is bigger than students just learning computer science. It is shaping a new image for Arkansas. It is making us more attractive to business and industry as well as families looking for a place to move."

Q: As Chairman of The Computer Science and Cybersecurity Taskforce (CSCTF), what excites you most about the work of that committee, their suggestions, and what it can mean for the future of Arkansas?

A: "We had a very large task force. Many different backgrounds were represented. There are many specific recommendations and each is important. I'd like to focus more on a couple of overall themes. One theme is breaking down the barriers between K-12, Higher Education, and business and industry. Right now many businesses are "training" their own employees which a tremendous expense and is time consuming. The better the communication between business and industry and educators, the better prepared students/workers will be and, just as importantly, jobs that require workers with certain skills are more likely to be filled. Secondly, there is a continuing need to reach underserved populations of students. We must continue to recruit minorities and females as well as expand our reach into rural Arkansas."

Q: If you could speak directly with a student wavering on enrolling into a CS course, what would you tell them?

A: "Every student is different and so my approach would be different. For some students the logic and reasoning of the importance of computer science and technology in their future is enough. For some students, it takes more. Actually seeing people working with technology in everyday jobs can change a student's view of what it could mean to him/her. I strongly believe there need to be more apprenticeships and internships for students to see inside the walls of business and industry. There is no question that a student not exposed to coding and/or computer science is going to be at a disadvantage in life. We need to add a "CS" to the 3 Rs."

Q: Is there anything more that you would like to add concerning the CS Initiative?

A: "I think this initiative is giving Arkansas and Arkansans a chance at a better future. One where we can lead and not follow. The computer science initiative is a win for everybody."
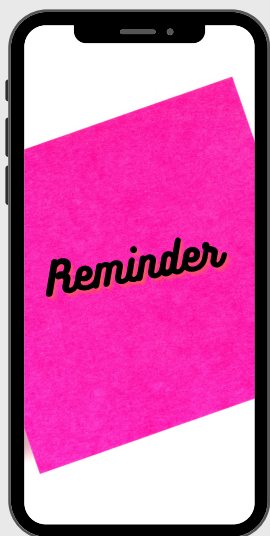
HALLOWEEN VIRTUAL ACTIVITIES

Cool crisp air, pumpkin spice lattes, and colorful foliage are all signs of fall. Oh, and don't forget fall activities for students. If you aren't excited about fall being in the air hopefully you will be after viewing these fall coding activities!

Most students love games, candy, and the flicker of pumpkins that they have carved. Check out the following virtual activities to get you and your students in a festive mood!

- https://www.tynker.com/blog/articles/ideas-and-tips/programming-projects-for-kids/how-to-code-your-own-spooky-halloween-project/

- https://www.createcodeload.com/halloween-scratch-lesson/

- https://www.instructables.com/id/Halloween-Microbit/

- https://studio.code.org/s/SpecialSeries

2020 APP IN A DAY OCTOBER DEADLINE

The Congressional App Challenge deadline is quickly approaching, and the CSforAR Specialist Team has put together a virtual App In A Day Digital Package.

Each teacher that wishes to participate can request this package which includes a pre-work presentation, digital materials, and an App in A Day presentation for the day of the event. This will allow App in a Day to be held in the classroom at the teacher's convenience. Click here to request this Digital Package HERE.

Don't forget that the deadline to enter the Congressional App Challenge is October 19, 2020, and teams must be registered prior to that date.

UPCOMING TRAINING
bit.ly/CSforARPD

NEW! CSFORAR ON INSTAGRAM
bit.ly/CSforARIG

CSFORAR COFFEE CAFE
bit.ly/ARCSCoffee

CONTACT US

Four Capitol Mall
Little Rock, AR 72201

CSforAR@arkansas.gov

October 2020

SOCIAL MEDIA

bit.ly/CSforARFB

#ARKidsCanCode
#CSforAR

Issue 4